

Standard USHC-4: The student will demonstrate an understanding of the causes and the course of the Civil War and Reconstruction in America.

USHC-4.5 Summarize the progress made by African Americans during Reconstruction and the subsequent reversals brought by Reconstruction's end, including the creation of the Freedmen's Bureau, gains in educational and political opportunity, and the rise of anti-African American factions and legislation. (H, E, G, P)

Taxonomy Level: 2B Understand/Conceptual Knowledge

Previous/future knowledge

In the 5th grade, students explained the effects of Reconstruction on African-Americans, including their new rights and restrictions, their motivations to relocate to the North and the West, and the actions of the Freedmen's Bureau (5-1.3). They compared the economic and social effects of Reconstruction on different populations, including the move from farms to factories and the change from the plantation system to sharecropping (5-1.4). They explained the purpose and motivations behind the rise of discriminatory laws and groups and their effect on the rights and opportunities of African Americans in different regions of the United States (5-1.5).

In the 8th grade, students summarized the events and the process that led to the ratification of South Carolina's constitution of 1868 and its provisions that effected various groups within the Southern society (8-4.3). Students also explained how events during Reconstruction improved opportunities for African Americans but created a backlash that, by the end of Reconstruction, negated the gains African Americans had made (8-8.4).

It is essential for the students to know:

The passage of the Black Codes in 1865 restricted the rights of African Americans. However, these codes were overturned by Congressional Reconstruction. **African Americans** made significant social and political progress during Reconstruction, but they made little economic progress. After Reconstruction ended these political and social gains were severely limited by laws passed in the 1890s.

At the end of the war, many freedmen left the plantation looking for relatives sold down the river or seeking a taste of freedom. Some black families were reunited. Most soon returned to the area that they knew best, their former plantations. It is a common misconception that former slaves left the plantation and the South as soon as they had the opportunity. After the Civil War, some African American moved to the West, such as the Exodusters who went to Kansas, however, most freedmen stayed in the South. The Great Migration to the North did not occur until the late 1800s and early 1900s. African Americans also formed their own churches where they were free to worship as they wished.

Under the auspices of **the Freedman's Bureau**, freed slaves were initially given provisions and protection from their former masters. The Bureau helped to negotiate labor contracts between former slaves and landowners and provided a system of courts to protect the rights of the freedmen from the Black Codes. Most importantly the Freedman's Bureau established schools that had a lasting impact on the quality of the lives of freedmen who were hungry for **education**. Black colleges were also established by northern philanthropists and Booker T. Washington established the Tuskegee Institute. For a very *short* while the Freedman's Bureau distributed parcels of confiscated land to former slaves. This land was returned to their previous white owners once southerners were pardoned, however. Therefore, promises of "forty acres and a mule" went unfulfilled.

Without land, freedmen who knew only agriculture had little opportunity to support their families. White landowners and former slaves entered into sharecropping agreements. Although freedmen moved out of the quarters to plots of land far from the big house, sharecropping and the crop lien system left former slaves in a position of economic dependence and destitution, especially as the price of cotton fell.

After the passage of the 15th Amendment, African-Americans were able to vote and served both in the United States Congress and in their local state legislatures. Most southern governments were not dominated by freedmen. However, they were in the hands of a sympathetic Republican Party. **Anti-African American factions** such as the Ku Klux Klan were organized to intimidate black voters. African Americans were able to continue to vote only with the protection of federal troops stationed in the South. When white voters were pardoned and returned to lead or 'redeem' southern governments, black office holders were gradually replaced. The election of 1876 and the Compromise of 1877 removed military protection for the political rights of the freedman and brought an end to Reconstruction.

In the two decades after the end of Reconstruction, the rights promised to the African American in the 14th and 15th Amendments were rescinded by southern state governments. Southern whites used race to drive a political wedge between poor black farmers and poor white farmers when farmers protested for change in the 1890s (USHC 5.3). Segregation through the Jim Crow laws, upheld by the Supreme Court in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), severely restricted the implementation of the equal protection provisions of the 14th Amendment. Poll taxes and literacy tests limited the effectiveness of the 15th Amendment for African Americans, while the grandfather clause assured that whites who could not read or pay the tax were able to vote.

It is not essential for the students to know:

Students do not need to know about the specific post war experiments at land distribution or that such economic changes might have given African Americans a greater political voice and opportunity to protect themselves after the end of Reconstruction. Students do not need to know the details of the emergence of the Jim Crow laws as a result of political changes in the 1890s associated with the Populist movement or the details of the efforts of Homer Plessy to challenge Jim Crow. They do not need to know that African Americans continued to face economic discrimination when southern textile mills opened in the late 1800s and they were not hired. For this indicator, students do not need to know about the efforts of George Washington Carver to develop other crops for the southern farmer or Booker T. Washington's Atlanta Compromise speech in which he asked for economic opportunity in exchange for compliance with social separation as this will be addressed in USHC 5.7.

Assessment guidelines:

Appropriate assessments will require students to **summarize** the progress made by African Americans during Reconstruction in educational, economic and political opportunity. They should be able to **explain** the role of the Freedman's Bureau. They should be able to **explain** the cause and effect of the sharecropping and crop lien systems on the economic opportunity of African Americans and on the economy of the South. They should be able to **explain** the role of the Ku Klux Klan in limiting the rights of freedmen during Reconstruction. Students should be able to **compare** the rights of African Americans during Reconstruction with the rights they were able to exercise after the imposition of Jim Crow laws and restrictions on voting. Students should be able to **interpret** maps, graphs, charts, illustrations, photographs and political cartoons to **infer** their relationship to information about the time period.